



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

September 14, 2005

CATHOLIC MONK CHARGED WITH SOLICITING SEX FROM MINORS OVER THE INTERNET

SAN DIEGO – An American-born Catholic monk from Mexico City made his initial appearance in U.S. District Court here this morning to face charges that he used the Internet to attempt to induce a minor to engage in unlawful sexual activity and that he attempted to transfer obscene material to a minor.

Earl John Place, 61, was named in a two-count federal indictment handed down in San Diego September 7 that was unsealed upon his arrest yesterday afternoon. The charges are the result of an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) with assistance from Mexican law enforcement officials.

The indictment against Place alleges that between June and September of this year, he used the mail and a computer to attempt to induce a minor to engage in unlawful sexual activity and that on August 21, 2005, he attempted to transfer obscene material to a minor under 16 years of age.

Place is currently in federal custody in San Diego after being arrested in Mexico City by Mexican law enforcement officials September 13. Place was expelled from Mexico by Mexican immigration officials.

“No one has license to sexually exploit children, period,” said United States Attorney Carol C. Lam. “This is true regardless of where a person lives or what station in life he occupies.”

“The Internet does not recognize international borders,” said Michael Unzueta, special agent-in-charge for ICE investigations in San Diego. “This investigation is a perfect example of why cooperation with our law enforcement counterparts in Mexico is so vitally important.”

Place is due back in federal court September 15 at 1:45 p.m. before Magistrate Judge Brooks for a detention hearing.

The charges against Place are part of Operation Predator, an ongoing ICE enforcement initiative to identify, investigate, arrest and, in the case of foreign nationals, deport child sex predators. Since the initiative began in July 2003, ICE agents have arrested more than 6,200 individuals nationwide, including more than 1,600 in California.

ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.